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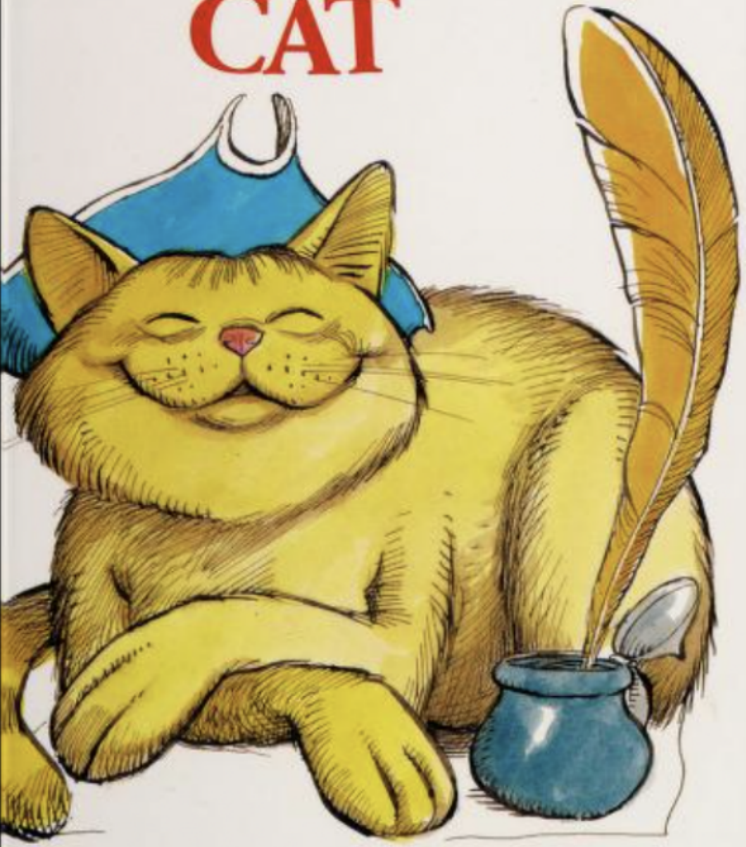
LEVELED BOOKS

Freedom CAT



written by H. H. Cardigan

illustrated by Philip Smith

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Freedom CAT

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Sometimes, being a cat is not so easy.

Summer has just begun, but it is already very hot in this room I live in. My master is so busy that he almost forgot to feed me today. Of course he is so busy that usually he forgets to feed himself, too.

My master's name is Thomas Jefferson. My name for him is Mr. Jeff. I'm keeping him company while he writes an important letter to the King of England.

The year is 1776. It is the first day in July.

"I'm hungry," I meow to Mr. Jeff the next morning.

Mr. Jeff puts down his pen, even though he's in the middle of writing a sentence.

"Here is some food, Freedom," he says. Mr. Jeff calls me "Freedom." He says it's what his letter is about.

Even though I've eaten, I'm still thinking about food. On the farm where we usually live I can find anything I want. Here, there's nothing I can reach but a dish of chocolate candies. Cats don't like chocolate.

For the time being, we are living upstairs in a brick house on Market Street, in the city of Philadelphia. Mr. Jeff is renting this floor of the house while he writes his letter. We really live out in the country, in Virginia.

To be honest, I don't like living in a city. For one thing, I could hunt for my food when I was in the country. Here I have to depend on Mr. Jeff—and his bad memory!

I would also like it better here if it were cooler. I think Mr. Jeff wishes that it were cooler, too. He always uses his hat as a fan. Sometimes he fans me. Then I purr.

Mr. Jeff is a good companion.

Mr. Jeff is here because a lot of people in America are tired of being ruled by the King of England. They want to be free.

These people picked Mr. Jeff to write their letter to the king. The letter will say that from now on, Americans will be free. They will not have to do what the King says any more.

Now that I think about it, maybe I know what this freedom letter is all about. Living here in this room under the roof has been miserable for me.

I dream all the time about hunting and playing on Mr. Jeff's estate in Virginia. When I'm there, I'm my own master. Here, I need Mr. Jeff to feed me and can't go outside at all. I can't do as I please. Maybe that's what it's like for the Americans!

It is taking Mr. Jeff a long time to write his letter. He knows it will be very important. It will be one of the most important letters in history. And I want him to write it!

Many important Americans will sign it. I wish I could sign it, too.

Mr. Jeff is finally done!

"Look! It's done now, Freedom," he says to me. "It took a long time to write, but this letter will surely make the king sit up and take notice."

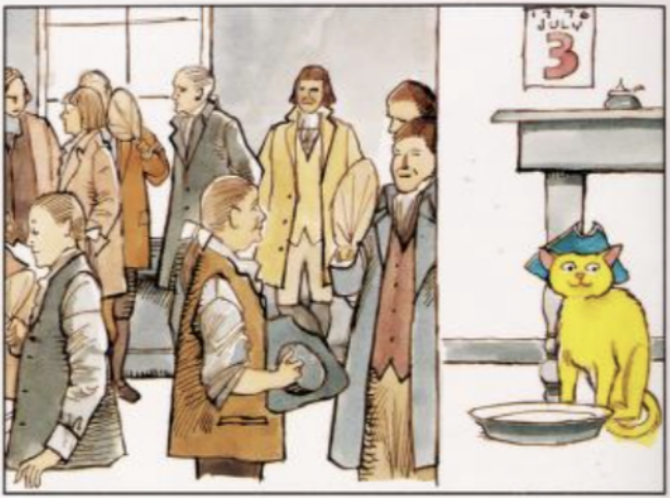
"That's good," I think. "Now can we go back to Virginia?"

Mr. Jeff puts on clean clothes. He feeds me. Then he heads for the door with his letter.

"Where are you going?" I wonder.

"I'm going to show this letter to the Continental Congress," he says.

Those must be the important men who will sign the letter, I think. Hurray!



For three days they talk about the letter. As each man offers his opinion about how to change it, the meeting seems to continue forever.

For three days, no one except me thinks about the heat. The men wake up in the morning and think about the letter. They think about it all day long, and they think about it when they go to sleep at night.

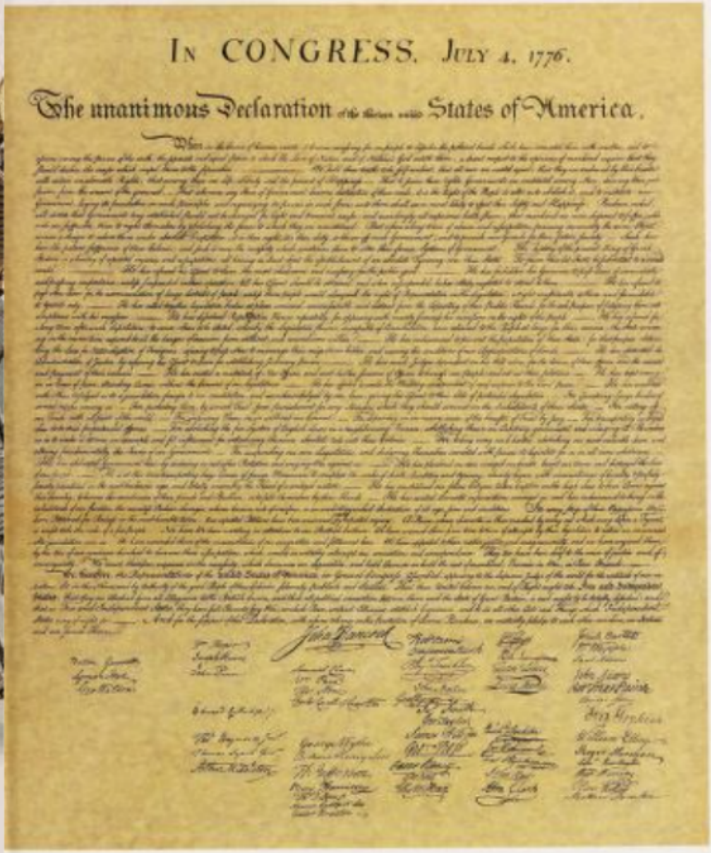
I think about what the letter means. I dream about freedom....

Finally the men agree about the letter. Everyone seems happy. But wait—some of them want to make a small change at the top. Others think the middle needs fixing. Others don't like the way the letter ends.

The meeting goes on....

They talk for what seems like years. Finally, they have a letter they are all happy with. It's about time!

Now, everyone can't wait to sign it. They want to send it off to the King of England right away.


IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America.

It is July 4, 1776. One at a time the "Congress" men sign the letter.

They call it the Declaration of Independence.

When Mr. Jeff comes back to our room, he is very happy. He picks me up and gives me a big kiss on the head. Then he gives me some cream.

"Our letter is on its way to the King," he says. "And you were a big help."

"How did I help?" I wonder.

Mr. Jeff keeps on talking. "Your company kept me from getting too homesick for Virginia while I wrote this letter."

"Hmm," I think. "Good for me."

"Now I can't wait to get back to the farm—and freedom!"

I purr as hard as I can.

Story Questions and Activity

1. This story happens in a famous month and year. What month and year is it?
2. Why was Mr. Jeff so happy at the end of the story?
3. Some of this story is made up, but most of it is true. What part do you think is real?
4. What is this story mostly about?
5. How are Charlie Anderson and Freedom alike?

Fourth of July

How many years ago was the July 4th in this story? Write about what your family and friends do on the Fourth of July.

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